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Global Environment Facility

Speech

of

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Global Environment Facility

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I want to thank the organizers for inviting me to this ground breaking event. It is also very encouraging to see so many familiar faces here. This is exactly the right time and place to be talking about this issue. As many of you in this Colloquium, I draw inspiration from this country's first female democratically-elected president, the "Iron Lady", Her Excellency, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Clearly without her brave commitment to human rights we would not be here at this conference today. I also want to thank Her Excellency, Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, for her leadership and dedication on the issue.

Before I launch into the message I have come to deliver today, let me start by briefly stating what I am NOT going to talk about.

I am NOT going to talk about how important it is for the GEF and other financing sources to invest in local actions to achieve global environmental objectives like climate change. I think we are all aware of how important it is to empower both women and men to make a difference in their own towns and villages when it comes to addressing climate change.

I am NOT going to talk about how climate change affects women and men in very different ways. My esteemed colleagues have already touched on that subject, and there are ample studies out there which you have all read, demonstrating that women bear a disproportionate burden of climate change consequences, whether it be because

of decreased food security, impact on livelihoods dependent on natural resources, water resource shortage and access, or increased burdens of care giving.

I am NOT going to talk about the importance of including a gender analysis at the onset of a project, whether it be a GEF project, or anyone else's. Once again, there is ample documentation available to illustrate that developing a set of gender disaggregated performance indicators and results framework are equally essential to allow for proper implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects with gender elements.

The message that I AM here to deliver to you today is that the GEF is committed to improving their performance in highlighting the link between gender equality and environmental sustainability, including in the climate change arena.

GEF's new publication: "Mainstreaming Gender at the GEF", which has been distributed to all of you today, is one of the exterior signs of this commitment. Highlighted in this account of the scope, content, and depth of gender mainstreaming in GEF projects, is the fact that **the news is not all good.**

Through the project portfolio review, we found that about 40 percent of our projects included some kind of gender mainstreaming action, whether it be gender analysis, a project component, a gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation system or

all of the above. However, when it came to climate change projects, the results were much lower. Only 11 percent of the portfolio included gender mainstreaming actions.

Nevertheless, in general, there have been some success stories in GEF projects, in terms of gender.

Some examples of climate change projects that included strong gender elements, focused on improved livelihood and health of women through biomass energy production, by introducing improved household cooking stoves in Africa.

One such GEF climate change project, the *Mali Household Energy and Universal Rural Access Project*, aimed to promote renewable energy technologies, to increase access to basic energy services in rural households and promote improved wood stoves to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Throughout implementation, strategies were designed to ensure that women, who had been identified as the sole family caretakers through cooking and collecting wood, would be direct beneficiaries of the project's outputs. The increased use of improved wood stoves through the project had a direct correlation with the positive impact on women and children's education, health and energy expenditures. Through these efforts, the project demonstrated not only climate change benefits, but also social and economic development in communities and a positive impact on women's health and economic status.

Another key GEF funding modality, the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), which reaches out to indigenous and local communities, highlights gender as a major element for its operation. About 17% of the SGP projects supported world-wide have focused specifically on the involvement of women.

An excellent example is the “*Grassroots Women Environmental Protection and Poverty Alleviation Project*”, implemented by the *Ntankah village Women Common Initiative Group*”, a grassroots organization in Cameroon focusing on gender empowerment, livelihood improvement and HIV/AIDS care. “*Ntankah*” means “light on the hill” in a local dialect of Cameroon. The group chose its name as they wanted to act as a beacon to women to lead them out of dependency and underdevelopment. Currently, the 24 women members, 14 of whom are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, promote women’s empowerment through the use of better farming methods, thereby reducing dependence on pesticides and fertilizer, soil and water conservation techniques, curbing the practice of slash-and-burn agriculture, and sustainable forest and hunting practices, including training of women in modern pig production. Increased farming efficiency and income generation provide the means to better care for HIV/AIDS patients, widows, and orphans.

The GEF recognizes that gender mainstreaming is good for projects, good for gender equality, and good for achieving GEF goals. To that end, we have adopted, since the early days of GEF, a public participation policy that has provisions to ensure

both women's and men's involvement in GEF projects. The GEF Agencies have also developed their own gender policies and strategies, which are applied to our projects.

Some of these results are encouraging, but clearly there is more work to be done. This publication was an important step forward in recognizing some of our successes and challenges, and strengthening our gender mainstreaming approach in the future.

Moving forward, the GEF plans to undertake a series of actions to facilitate a more effective and systematic approach for gender mainstreaming, including:

- Identifying and working on specific thematic issues with strong gender dimensions, such as sustainable forest management, indigenous peoples, and climate change adaptation, and incorporating gender in the focal area strategies and strategic programs, as appropriate.
- Practicing what we preach, by strengthening the GEF institutional framework for gender mainstreaming, and socio-economic aspects in general, through the appointment of a gender focal point to support developing, implementing, and monitoring guidance and strategy on gender mainstreaming, in addition to strengthening gender mainstreaming capacities among the GEF staff themselves, to increase their own understanding of gender mainstreaming.

- Incorporating gender as an explicit element for review in monitoring and evaluation exercises at project, program and corporate levels.

- Ensuring that appropriate funding is allocated within GEF projects to adequately address gender mainstreaming and implementing gender mainstreaming actions, including gender analysis, identification of gender-disaggregated data and indicators in GEF projects. We want to eliminate the time-worn excuse, that funds have run out, which we have been hearing for years to justify not mainstreaming environment, and which we hear even more often to justify not mainstreaming gender.
 - **The project preparation grant**, together with co-financing resources, could be utilized to conduct appropriate gender assessment and analysis.

- Last but not least, we plan to establish and strengthen networks with partners that have substantive experience working on gender issues, and utilize their expertise to develop and implement GEF projects.

In keeping with this last goal, I would like to take this opportunity to pledge GEF support for your new Angie Brooks International Centre on Women's Empowerment, Leadership, Development, Peace and Security, to be based in here

in Monrovia. I applaud the Center's ambitious programme, which will ensure that the results of our discussions during this Colloquium do NOT just generate another CD-ROM, but will serve as a spring-board for further research, workshops and training in women's empowerment and leadership development.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with myself or any of my GEF Colleagues, and let us know how we can contribute to this Center, and to the nurturing of current and future women leaders.

Thank you.